



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
2D MARINE AIRCRAFT WING
II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
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POLICY LETTER 06-10 Ch 1

From: Commanding General, 2d Marine Aircraft Wing
To: Distribution List

Subj: SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 6100.2A
(b) MCO P1700.29
(c) Marine Corps Suicide Prevention Website
(<http://www.usmc-mccs.org/suicideprevent/>)
(d) MARADMIN 134/09

Encl: (1) Response Plan for Dealing with an Individual in
Distress
(2) Standing Operations Procedures Guide for Suicide
Intervention

1. Situation. To provide guidance concerning suicide awareness and prevention, per references (a) through (d).

2. Cancellation. Policy Letter 02-05.

3. Mission. At this point in 2010, the Marine Corps has reported 116 suicide attempts and 28 confirmed suicide fatalities. My second night in command we lost one of our warriors to his own hand. It saddened my wife and I greatly, and degraded the war fighting readiness of one of my finest units. The nation is at war and we need every Marine in the fight. As leaders, we understand how devastating suicide can be on a personal and a unit level. It crushes morale, destroys families, disrupts unit cohesion, and forces a unit to train another warrior to do the job of the Marine no longer in the line. The complex issues associated with suicide require that we use all means available to develop awareness and intervene to prevent this needless loss of life. Our mission is to create a safer environment and prevent many of these tragic losses of life by identifying the risk factors, intervening rapidly, and

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referring immediately when one of our Marines or Sailors needs help. The death of a Marine or Sailor under any circumstance is a tragedy, but the senselessness of a death by his or her own hand is incomprehensible.

4. Execution

a. Commander's Intent and Concept of Operations

(1) Commander's Intent. We must do everything in our power to identify our personnel at risk of suicide and take the appropriate action to prevent any suicide incident from occurring as shown in enclosures (1) and (2). By recognizing the four leading causes of suicide, (relationship issues, work-related performance difficulties, financial issues and legal problems), identifying the warning signs, and encouraging Marines and Sailors to seek help, most suicides can be prevented. Individuals struggling with issues that could lead to suicides may be identified by any of the following indicators:

- (a) Experiencing difficulties in relationships.
- (b) Performance difficulties at work.
- (c) Legal issues.
- (d) Financial problems.
- (e) Depression, substance abuse.
- (f) Talking or hinting of suicide intent.
- (g) Previous suicide attempt.
- (h) Giving away possessions.
- (i) Preoccupation with death.
- (j) Drastic mood swings: isolation, withdrawal, impulsive anger, or aggressive behavior.

(2) Concept of Operations

(a). Some individuals that display no obvious outward signs before suicide, perhaps are fearful of appearing "weak" or "defective" in the eye of their fellow Marines or

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Sailors. Since the warning signs are not always present and we may be unaware of personal issues, it is critical that our Marines and Sailors feel their command is supportive of them in seeking help through the many resources available. Most importantly, leaders must continue with the appropriate support through every step of the intervention process.

(b) Every leader must become personally involved in preventing suicide by ensuring every Marine and Sailor in your command understands that suicide prevention is a responsibility we all share from the most senior to the most junior person. Part of our legacy includes taking care of our own. I expect leaders at every level to be proactive in ensuring that anyone needing help receives it immediately.

5. Administration and Logistics. All Marines and Sailors are challenged to eliminate the stigma attached to seeking medical help. Asking for help when needed is not a weakness. Here are the following steps you must take to support intervention efforts. Commanders will:

a. Ensure suicide prevention is a primary topic at every level of professional military education.

b. Establish a command climate where every Marine/Sailor takes responsibility for suicide prevention and where those most at risk receive the support, encouragement and treatment needed to provide for their safety.

c. Designate the appropriate number of Staff Noncommissioned Officers and Officers to attend Suicide Facilitator's training offered by Marine Corps Community Services.

d. Recommend advanced Suicide Prevention Skills training for Staff Noncommissioned Officers and Officers such as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) or similar intervention training models.

e. Ensure Command Duty Officers and Duty Noncommissioned Officers are familiar with reporting procedures for suicide ideations, gestures and attempts.

6. Command and Signal

a. Mitigation takes the "T.E.A.M." approach to suicide prevention

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(1) T - Take the Threats Seriously! - Never minimize the situation. Do not leave a Marine or Sailor alone in the fight.

(2) E - Ensure Safety! - The person in crisis may be highly agitated, violent or abusive. Take action to ensure that the person in crisis is not a threat to themselves, to those offering aid, or to others. You cannot help render assistance if you become a victim. Remember that remaining calm and in control will aid in calming the individual. Never leave a person demonstrating suicidal warning signs alone.

(3) A - Ask Questions! - It is important to know just how much time you have to intervene. Always keep the person engaged with you, either in person or on the phone. Get as much information as you can. Some questions might include:

- (a) Are you thinking of killing yourself?
- (b) Have you ingested any unusual substance?
- (c) Do you have a weapon?
- (d) Do you have a plan or know how you would do it?
- (e) Have you written a note or goodbye letter?
- (f) Have you given anything away?

(4) M - Make Others Aware! - The primary task of intervention is to get help immediately. Notify the command and emergency services immediately upon the discovery of a suicide attempt or gesture. Continue to keep them informed through frequent updates. Collect the following information:

- (a) Name
- (b) Present Location
- (c) Unit
- (d) Phone Number

b. Command. This Policy Letter is applicable to all 2d Marine Aircraft Wing units and personnel.

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c. Signal. This Policy Letter is effective on the date signed.


R. W. REGAN
By direction

DISTRIBUTION: A

RESPONSE PLAN FOR DEALING WITH AN INDIVIDUAL IN DISTRESS
(WHEN CONFRONTED WITH A SUICIDE CRISIS)

1. Take Threats Seriously! The worst possible response is to minimize the importance of the situation. The primary task is to assist the individual seeking help as quickly as possible.
2. Stabilize the Situation! The person in crisis may be highly agitated, violent and/or abusive. He/she may be threatening to harm himself/herself. The appearance of confidence and authority will go a long way in calming the person. Notify the Provost Marshal's Office immediately, and they will dispatch Military Police (MP). If the individual in question is violent or there is reason to believe self-harm is imminent, let the MP's handle the situation. If the person is uncomfortable in current surroundings, he/she should be removed.
3. Take Charge! Do not allow a group of people to barrage the person with questions or advice. The person in crisis needs to focus on one person. If a chaplain or medical personnel are present, let them handle the situation. If no assistance is available, let the person focus on you.

STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE GUIDE FOR SUICIDE INTERVENTION

1. Remain calm. Request assistance, if possible, while responding to the request for help.

2. Suicide Emergency

- a. Administer First Aid (if required)
- b. Call 911
- c. Remove anything lethal from immediate vicinity
- d. Do not leave member unattended

3. Telephone Intervention

a. If a distressed or suicidal person calls or comes into the office, gather the following information:

Date:_____ Time:_____ Caller ID Number:_____

b. If the person responds in the following ways, contact the Provost Marshals Office or the duty chaplain.

- (1) "I am so depressed, I cannot go on"
- (2) "Life is not worth living"
- (3) "I wish I were dead", etc.

c. The order in which you ask the questions may differ depending on the specific situation. Proceed to ask them the following questions, making sure to be yourself; show concern, be sympathetic, listen, stay calm, offer help and hope, stay on the phone, and get help immediately. Ask:

(1) Are you having thoughts of suicide? Yes___ No___

(2) Have you thought about how you would harm yourself?
Yes___ No___

(3) Do you have what you need to do it? Do you have a gun, pills, etc? Yes___ No___

(a) If the person indicates he/she has taken pills, ask: How much, when, etc._____